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THE ENJOYMENT OF ART

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BY

CARLETON NOYES

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THIRD IMPRESSION

To

ROBERT HENRI

AND

VAN D. PERRINE

This day before dawn I ascended a hill and look'd at
the crowded heaven,
And I said to my spirit *When we become the enfolders of
those orbs, and the pleasure and knowledge of every
thing in them, shall we be fill'd and satisfied then?*
And my spirit said *No, we but level that lift to pass and
continue beyond.*

WALT WHITMAN

PREFACE

THE following pages are the answer to questions which a young man asked himself when, fresh from the university, he found himself adrift in the great galleries of Europe. As he stood helpless and confused in the presence of the visible expressions of the spirit of man in so many ages and so many lands, one question recurred insistently: *Why* are these pictures? What is the meaning of all this striving after expression? What was the aim of these men who have left their record here? What was their moving impulse? Why, why does the human spirit seek to manifest itself in forms which we call beautiful?

He turned to histories of art and to biographies of artists, but he found no answer to the "Why?" The philosophers with their theories of æsthetics helped him little to understand the dignity and force of this portrait or the beauty of that landscape. In the conversation of his artist friends there was no enlightenment, for they talked about "values" and "planes of modeling" and the mysteries of "tone." At last he turned in upon himself: What does this canvas mean to me? And here he found his answer. This work of art is the revelation to me of a fuller beauty, a deeper harmony, than I have ever seen or felt. (The artist is he who has experienced this new wonder in nature and who wants to communicate his joy, in concrete forms, to his fellow men.)

The purpose of this book is to set forth in simple, untechnical fashion the nature and the meaning of a work of art. Although the illustrations of the underlying principles are drawn mainly from pictures, yet the conclusions apply equally to books and to music. It is true that the manifestations of the art-impulse are innumerable, embracing not only painting, sculpture, literature, music, and architecture, but also the handiwork of the craftsman in the designing of a rug or in the fashioning of a cup or a candlestick; it is true that each art has its special province and function, and that each is peculiarly adapted to the expression of a certain order of emotion or idea, and that the distinctions between one art and another are not to be inconsiderately swept aside or obscured. Yet art is

one. It is possible, without confusing the individual characteristics essential to each, to discuss these principles under the comprehensive rubric of Art.

The attempt is made here to reduce the supposed mysteries of art discussion to the basis of practical, every-day intelligence and common sense. What the ordinary man who feels himself in any way attracted towards art needs is not more and constantly more pictures to look at, not added lore about them, not further knowledge of the men and the times that have produced them; but rather what he needs is some understanding of what the artist has aimed to express, and, as reinforcing that understanding, the capacity rightly to appreciate and enjoy.

It is hoped that in this book the artist

may find expressed with simplicity and justice his own highest aims; and that the appreciator and the layman may gain some insight into the meaning of art expression, and that they may be helped a little on their way to the enjoyment of art.

HARVARD COLLEGE, *December tenth, 1902.*

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THE ENJOYMENT OF ART

I

THE PICTURE AND THE MAN

At any exhibition of paintings, more particularly at some public gallery or museum, one can hardly fail to reflect that an interest in pictures is unmistakably widespread. People are there in considerable numbers, and what is more striking, they seem to represent every station and walk in life. It is evident that pictures, as exhibited to the public, are not the cult of an initiated few; their appeal is manifestly to no one class; and this popular interest is as genuine as it is extended.

Thus reflectively scanning the crowd, the observer asks himself: What has at-

tracted these numbers to that which might be supposed not to be understood of the many? And what are the pictures that in general draw the popular attention?

A few persons have of course drifted into the exhibition out of curiosity or from lack of something better to do. So much is evident at once, for these file past the walls listlessly, seldom stopping, and then but to glance at those pictures which are most obviously like the familiar object they pretend to represent,—such as the bowl of flowers which the beholder can almost smell, the theatre-checks and five-dollar note pasted on a wall which tempt him to finger them, or the panel of game birds which puzzles him to determine whether the birds are real or not. These visitors, however, are not the most numerous. With the great majority it is not enough that the picture be a clever piece of imitation or illusion: transferring their

interest from the mere execution, they demand further that the subjects represented shall be pleasing. The crowd pause before a sunny landscape, with cows standing by the shaded pool; they gather about the brilliant portrait of a woman splendidly arrayed, — a favorite actress or a social celebrity; they linger before a group of children wading in a brook, or a dog crouching mournfully by an empty cradle. At length, with an approving and sympathetic word of comment, they pass on to the next pleasing picture. Some canvases, not the most popular ones, are yet not without their interest for a few; these visitors are taking things a little more seriously; they do not try to see every picture, they do not hurry; they seem to be considering the canvas immediately before them with concentrated attention.

No one of all these people is insensible to the appeal of the picturesque: their pre-

sence at the exhibition is evidence of that. In life they like to see a bowl of flowers, a sunny landscape, a beautiful woman in beautiful surroundings; and naturally they are interested in that which represents and recalls the reality. At once it is plain, however, that to different individuals the various pictures appeal in different measure and for differing reasons. To one the very fact of representation is a mystery and fascination. To another the important thing is the subject; the picture must represent what he likes in nature or in life. To a third the subject itself is of less concern than what the painter wanted to say about it: the artist saw a beauty manifested by an ugly beggar, perhaps, and he wanted to show that beauty to his fellows, who could not perceive it for themselves.

The special interest in pictures of each of these three men is not without its warrant in experience. What man is wholly

indifferent to the display of human skill? Who is there without his store of pleasurable associations, who is not stirred by any call which rouses them into play? What lover of beauty is not ever awake to the revelation of new beauty? Indeed, upon these three principles together, though in varying proportion, depends the full significance of a great work of art.

As the lover of pictures looks back over the period of his conscious interest in exhibitions and galleries, it is not improbable that his earliest memories attach themselves to those paintings which most closely resembled the object represented. He remembers the great wonder which he felt that a man with mere paint and canvas could so reproduce the reality of nature. So it is that those paintings which are perhaps the first to attract the man who feels an interest in pictures awakening are such as display most obviously the painter's skill.

Whatever the subject imitated, the fascination remains; that such illusion is possible at all is the mystery and the delight.

But as his interest in pictures grows with indulgence, as his experience widens, the beholder becomes gradually aware that he is making a larger demand. After the first shock of pleasurable surprise is worn away, he finds that the repeated exhibition of the painter's dexterity ceases to satisfy him; these clever pieces of deception manifest a wearying sameness, after all; and the beholder begins now to look for something more than mere expertness. Thinking on his experience, he concludes that the subjects which can be imitated deceptively are limited in range and interest; he has a vague, disquieting sense that somehow these pictures do not mean anything. Yet he is puzzled. Art aims to represent, he tells himself, and it should follow that the best art is that which represents most closely

and exactly. He recalls, perhaps, the legend of the two Greek painters, one with his picture of the fruit which the birds flew down to peck at, the other with his painting of a veil which deceived his very rival. The imitative or "illusionist" picture pleads its case most plausibly. A further experience of such pictures, however, fails to bring the beholder beyond his simple admiration of the painter's skill; and that skill, he comes gradually to realize, does not differ essentially from the adroitness of the juggler who keeps a billiard ball, a chair, and a silk handkerchief rotating from hand to hand.

Conscious, then, of a new demand, of an added interest to be satisfied, the amateur of pictures turns from the imitative canvas to those paintings which appeal more widely to his familiar experience. Justly, he does not here forgo altogether his delight in the painter's cunning of hand, only

he requires further that the subjects represented shall be pleasing. It must be a subject whose meaning he can recognize at once: a handsome or a strong portrait, a familiar landscape, some little incident which tells its own story. The spectator is now attracted by those pictures which rouse a train of agreeable associations. He stops before a canvas representing a bit of rocky coast, with the ocean tumbling in exhilaratingly. He recognizes the subject and finds it pleasing; then he wonders where the picture was painted. Turning to his catalogue, he reads: "37. On the Coast of Maine." "Oh, yes," he says to himself, "I was on the coast of Maine last summer, and I remember what a glorious time I had sitting on the rocks of an afternoon, with some book or other which the ocean was too fine to let me read. I like that picture." If the title had read "Massachusetts Coast," it is to be feared

he would not have liked the canvas quite so well. The next picture which he notices shows, perhaps, a stately woman sumptuously attired. It is with a slight shock of disappointment that the visitor finds recorded in his catalogue: "41. Portrait of a Lady." He could see that much for himself. He hoped it was going to be the painter's mother or somebody's wife, — a person he ought to know about. But the pictures which appeal to him most surely are those which tell some little story, — "The Lovers," "The Boy leaving Home," "The Wreck." Here the subject, touching some one of the big human emotions, to which no man is wholly insensible, calls out the response of immediate interest and sympathy. It is something which he can understand.

At length there comes a day when the visitor stops before a landscape which seems to him more beautiful than anything he has

ever seen in nature; or some portrait discloses a strength of character or radiates a charm of personality which he has seldom met with in life. Whence comes this beauty, this strength, this graciousness? Can it be that the painter has seen a new wonder in nature, a new significance in human life? The spectator's previous experience of pictures has familiarized him in some measure with the means of expression which the painter employs. More sensitive now to the appeal of color and form, he sees that what the artist cares to present on his canvas is just his peculiar sense of the beauty in the world, a beauty that is best symbolized and made manifest through the medium of color and form. Before he understood this eloquent language which the painter speaks, he misinterpreted those pictures whose significance he mistook to be literary and not pictorial. He early liked the narrative picture because

here was a subject he could understand; he could rephrase it in his own terms, he could retell the story to himself in words. Now words are the means of expression of every-day life. Because of this fact, the art which employs words as its medium is the art which comes nearest to being universally understood, namely, literature. The other arts use each a medium which it requires a special training to understand. Without some sense of the expressiveness of color, line, form, and sounds, — a sense which can be cultivated, — one is necessarily unable to grasp the full and true meaning of picture, statue, or musical composition. One must realize further that the artist thinks and feels in his peculiar medium; his special meaning is conceived and expressed in color or form or sound. The task of the appreciator, correspondingly, is to receive the artist's message in the same terms in which it was conceived.

The tendency is inevitable, however, to translate the meaning of the work into words, the terms in which men commonly phrase their experience. A parallel tendency is manifest in one's efforts to learn a foreign language. The English student of French at first thinks in English and laboriously translates phrase for phrase into French; and in hearing or reading the foreign language, he translates the original, word for word, into his native tongue before he can understand its sense: he has mastered the language only when he has reached that point where English is no longer present to his consciousness: he thinks in French and understands in French. Similarly, to translate the message of any art into terms that are foreign to it, to phrase the meaning of music or painting, for example, in words, is to fail of its essential, true significance. The import of music is musical; the meaning of pictures is not

literary but pictorial. In the understanding of this truth, then, the spectator penetrates to the artist's real intention; and he becomes aware that when he used the picture as the peg whereon to hang his own reflections and ideas, he missed the meaning of the artist's work. "As I look at this canvas," he tells himself, "it is not what I know of the coast of Maine that is of concern, but what the painter has seen and felt of its beauty and wants to reveal to me." Able at last to interpret the painter's medium, the appreciator comes to seek in pictures not primarily an exhibition of the craftsman's skill, not even a recall of his own pleasurable experiences, but rather, beyond all this, a fuller visible revelation of beauty.

The essential significance of art, that art is revelation, is illustrated not only by painting but by the other arts as well. In music, to take but a single example, are present

the same elements that constitute the appeal of pictures,—skill in the rendering, a certain correspondence with experience, and the power of imaginative interpretation of the facts of life. The music-hall performer who wins the loudest and heartiest applause is he who does the greatest number of pyrotechnic, wonderful things on the piano, or holds a high note on the cornet for the longest time. His success, as with the painter whose aim is to create illusion, rests upon men's instinctive admiration for the exhibition of skill. Again, as the imitative picture involves not only the display of dexterity, but also likeness to the thing represented and the consequent possibility of recognizing it immediately, so in the domain of music there is an order of composition which seems to aim at imitation, — the so-called "descriptive" music. A popular audience is delighted with the "Cats' Serenade," executed on the violins with overwhelming likeness

to the reality, or with the "Day in the Country," in which the sun rises in the high notes, cocks crow, horses rattle down the road, merrymakers frolic on the green, clouds come up in the horns, lightning plays in the violins, thunder crashes in the drums and cymbals, the merrymakers scatter in the whole orchestra, the storm passes diminuendo, and in the muted violins the full moon rises serenely into a twilight sky. Here the intention is easily understood; the layman cannot fail to recognize what the composer wanted to say. And as in the case of pictures which interest the beholder because he can translate their subject into the terms which are his own medium of expression, that is, words, so with descriptive music, broadly speaking, the interest and significance is literary and not musical. Still another parallel is presented. Just as those pictures are popular whose subjects lie within the range of familiar experience,

such as cows by the shaded pool, or children playing, or whose subjects touch the feelings; so, that music is popular which is phrased in obvious and familiar rhythms such as the march and the waltz, or which appeals readily and unmistakably to sentiment and emotion. It is after the lover of music has traversed these passages of musical expression and has proved their limitations that he comes to seek in music new ranges of experience, unguessed-at possibilities of feeling, which the composer has himself sounded and which he would communicate to others. He is truly the artist only as he leads his auditors into regions of beautiful living which they alone and of themselves had not penetrated. For it is then that his work reveals.

Only such pictures, too, will have a vital meaning as reveal. The imitative and the iterative alike, that which adds nothing to the object and that which adds nothing to the

experience of the beholder, though once pleasing, now fail to satisfy. The appreciator calls for something fuller. He wants to pass beyond the object, beyond his experience of it, into the realm of illumination whither the true artist would lead him. The development of appreciation, as the amateur has come to realize in his own person, is only the enlargement of demand. The appreciator requires ever fresh revelations of beauty. He discovers, too, that in practice the tendency of his development is in the direction of exclusion. As he goes on, he cares for fewer and fewer things, because those works which can minister to his ever-expanding desire of beauty must needs be less numerous. But these make up in largeness of utterance, in the intensity of their message, what they lack in numbers. Nor does this outcome make against a fancied catholicity of taste. The true appreciator still sees in his earlier loves something that

is good, and he values the good the more justly that he sees it now in its right relation and apprehends its real significance. As each in its turn led him to seek further, each became an instrument in his development. For himself he has need of them no longer. But far from contemning them, he is rightly grateful for the solace they have afforded, as by them he has made his way up into the fuller meaning of art.

II

THE WORK OF ART AS SYMBOL

In the experience of the man who feels himself attracted to pictures and who studies them intelligently and with sympathy, there comes a day when suddenly a canvas reveals to him a new beauty in nature or in life. Much seeing and much thinking, much bewilderment and some disappointment, have taught him that in the appreciation of pictures the question at issue is not, how cleverly has the painter imitated his object, is not, how suggestive is the subject of pleasing associations; he need simply ask himself, "What has the artist conceived or felt in the presence of this landscape, this arrangement of line and color, this human

face, that I have not seen and felt, and that he wants to communicate to me?"

The incident of the single canvas, which by its illuminating revealment first disclosed to the observer the true significance of pictures, is typical of the whole scope of art. The mission of art is to reveal. It is the prophet's message to his fellow men, the apocalypse of the seer. The artist is he to whom is vouchsafed a special apprehension of beauty. He has the eye to see, the temperament to feel, the imagination to interpret; it is by virtue of these capacities, this high, transfiguring vision, that he is an artist; and his skill of hand, his equipment with the means of expression, is incidental to the great fact that he has somewhat to express that the common man has not. To his work, the manifestation of his spirit in material form, his perception made sensible, is accorded the name of art.

Art is expression. It is not a display of

skill; it is not the reproduction of external forms or appearances; it does not even, as some say, exist for itself: it is a message, a means. To cry "Art for Art's sake!" is to converse with the echo. Such a definition but moves in a circle, and doubles upon itself. No; art is for the artist's sake. The artist is the agent or human instrument whereby the supreme harmony, which is beauty, is manifested to men. Art is the medium by which the artist communicates himself to his fellows; and the individual work is the expression of what the artist felt or thought, as at the moment some new aspect of the universal harmony was revealed to his apprehension. Art is emotion objectified, but the object is subordinated to the emotion as means is to an end. The material result is not the final significance, but what of spiritual meaning or beauty the artist desired to convey. Not what is painted, as the layman thinks, not how it

is painted, as the technician considers, but why did the artist paint it, is the question which sums up the truth about art. The appreciator need simply ask, What is the beauty, what the idea, which the artist is striving to reveal by these symbols of color and form? He understands that the import of the work is the *idea*, and that the work itself is beautiful because it symbolizes a beautiful idea; its significance is spiritual. The function of art, then, is through the medium of concrete, material symbols to reveal to men whatever of beauty has been disclosed to the artist's more penetrating vision.

In order to seize the real meaning of art it is necessary to strip the word beauty of all the wrappings of customary associations and the accretions of tradition and habit. As the word is current in ordinary parlance, the attribute of beauty is ascribed to that which is pleasing, pretty, graceful, comely;

in fine, to that which is purely agreeable. But surely such is not the beauty which Rembrandt saw in the filthy, loathsome beggar. To Rembrandt the beggar was expressive of some force or manifestation of the supreme universal life, wherein all things work together to a perfect harmony. Beauty is the essential quality belonging to energy, character, significance. A merely agreeable object is not beautiful unless it is expressive of a meaning; whatever, on the other hand, is expressive of a meaning, however shocking it may be in itself, however much it may fail to conform to conventional standards, is beautiful. Beauty does not reside in the object. No; it is the artist's sense of the great meaning of things; and in proportion as he finds that meaning — the qualities of energy, force, aspiration, life — manifest and expressed in objects do those objects become beautiful. Such was the conception of beauty Keats

had when he wrote in a letter: "What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth, — whether it existed before or not, — for I have the same idea of all our passions as of Love: they are all, in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty." And similarly: "I can never feel certain of any truth, but from a clear perception of its Beauty." In his verse he sings: —

"'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,' — that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

When it is said here, then, that the artist sees beauty in nature, the phrase may be understood as a convenient but inexact formula, as when one says the sun rises or the sun sets. Beauty is in the landscape only in the sense that these material forms express for the artist an idea he has conceived of some aspect of the universal life.

The artist is impelled to embody concretely his perception of beauty, and so to

communicate his emotion, because the emotion wakened by the perception of new harmony in things is most fully possessed and enjoyed as it comes to expression. Thus to make real his ideal and find the expression of himself is the artist's supreme happiness. A familiar illustration of the twin need and delight of expression may be found in the handiwork produced in the old days when every artisan was an artist. It may be, perhaps, a key which some craftsman of Nuremberg fashioned. In the making of it he was not content to stop with the key which would unlock the door or the chest. It was his key, the work of his hands; and he wrought upon it lovingly, devotedly, and made it beautiful, finding in his work the expression of his thought or feeling; it was the realization for that moment of his ideal. His sense of pleasure in the making of it prompted the care he bestowed upon it; his delight was in crea-

tion, in rendering actual a new beauty which it was given him to conceive.

In its origin as a work of art the key does not differ from a landscape by Inness, an "arrangement" by Whistler, a portrait by Sargent. The artist, whether craftsman or painter, is deeply stirred by some passage in his experience, a fair object or a true thought: it is the imperious demand of his nature, as it is his supreme pleasure, to give his feeling expression. The form which his expression takes — it may be key or carpet, it may be statue, picture, poem, symphony, or cathedral — is that which most closely responds to his idea, the form which most truly manifests and represents it.

All art, as the expression of the artist's idea, is in a certain definite sense representative. Not that all art reproduces an external reality, as it is said that painting or literature represents and music does not; but every work of art, in painting, poetry,

music, or in the handiwork of the craftsman, *represents* in that it is the symbol of the creator's ideal. To be sure, the painter or sculptor or dramatist draws his symbols from already existing material forms, and these symbols are like objects in a sense in which music is not. But line and color and the life of man, apart from this resemblance to external reality, are representative or symbolic of the artist's idea precisely as the craftsman's key, the designer's pattern, or the musician's symphony. The beautifully wrought key, the geometric pattern of oriental rug or hanging, the embroidered foliation on priestly vestment, are works of art equally with the landscape, the statue, the drama, or the symphony, in that they are one and all the sensuous manifestation of some new beauty spiritually conceived.

The symbolic character of a work of art must not be lost from sight, for it is the clue to the interpretation of pictures, as it is

of all art. The painter feels his way through the gamut of his palette to a harmony of color just as truly as the musician summons the notes of his scale and marshals them into accord. The painter is moved by some sweep of landscape; it wakens in him an emotion. When he sets himself to express his emotion in the special medium with which he works, he represents by pigment the external aspect of the landscape, yes; but not in order to imitate it or reproduce it: he represents the landscape because the colors and the forms which he registers upon the canvas express for him the emotions roused by those colors and those forms in nature. He does not try to match his grays with nature's grays, but this nuance which he gropes for on his palette, and having found it, touches upon his canvas, expresses for him what that particular gray in nature made him feel. His one compelling purpose is in all fidelity and singleness of aim to " trans-

late the impression received." The painter's medium is just as symbolic as the notes of the musician's nocturne or the words of the poet's sonnet, equally inspired by the hour and place. Color and line and form, although they happen to be the properties of *things*, have a value for the emotions as truly as musical sounds: they are the outward symbol of the inward thought or feeling, the visible bodying forth of the immaterial idea.

The symbolic character of the material world is not early apprehended. In superficial reaction upon life, men do not readily pass beyond the immediate actuality. That the spiritual meaning of all things is not perceived, that all things are not seen to be beautiful, or expressive of the supreme harmony, is due to men's limited powers of sight and feeling. Therefore is it that the artist is given in order that he may reveal as yet unrealized spiritual relations, or new beauty. The workaday world with its bur-

den of exigent "realities" has need of a Carlyle to declare that things are but a wonderful metaphor and the physical universe is the garment of the living God. In the realm of thought an Emerson, seer of transcendent vision, must come to restore his fellows to their birthright, which is the life of the spirit. As in life, so in art men do not easily pass the obvious and immediate. The child reads "Gulliver's Travels" or "The Pilgrim's Progress" for the story. As his experience of life both widens and deepens, he is able to see through externals, and he penetrates to the real significance, of which the narrative is but the symbol. So it is with an insight born of experience that the lover of art sees no longer the "subject," but the beauty which the subject is meant to symbolize.

In the universal, all-embracing constitution of things, nothing is without its significance. To be aware that everything has a meaning is necessary to the understanding

of art, as indeed of life itself. That meaning, which things symbolize and express, it cannot be said too often, is not necessarily to be phrased in words. It is a meaning for the spirit. A straight line affects one differently from a curve; that is, each kind of line means something. Every line in the face utters the character behind it; every movement of the body is eloquent of the man's whole being. "The expression of the face balks account," says Walt Whitman,

"But the expression of a well-made man appears not only in his face,
It is in his limbs and joints also, it is curiously in the joints of his hips and wrists,
It is in his walk, the carriage of his neck, the flex of his waist and knees, dress does not hide him,
The strong sweet quality he has strikes through the cotton and broadcloth,
To see him pass conveys as much as the best poem, perhaps more,
You linger to see his back, and the back of his neck and shoulder-side."

Crimson rouses a feeling different from that roused by yellow, and gray wakens a mood different from either. In considering this symbolic character of colors it is necessary to distinguish between their value for the emotions and merely literary associations. That white stands for purity or blue for fidelity is a conventionalized and attached conception. But the pleasure which a man has in some colors or his dislike for others depends upon the effect each color has upon his emotions, and this effect determines for him the symbolic value of the color. In the same way sounds are symbolic in that they affect the emotions apart from associated "thoughts." Even with a person who has no technical knowledge of music, the effect of the minor key is unmistakably different from the major. The tones and modulations of the voice, quite apart from the words uttered, have an emotional value and significance. Everything, line, form,

gesture, movement, color, sound, all the material world, is expressive. All objective forms have their meaning, and rightly perceived are, in the sense in which the word is used here, beautiful, in that they represent or symbolize a spiritual idea.

Thus it is that beauty is not in the object but in man's sense of the object's symbolic expressiveness. The amateur may be rapt by some artist's "quality of color." But it is probable that in the act of laying on his pigment, the artist was not thinking of his "quality" at all, but, rapt himself by the perception of the supreme harmony at that moment newly revealed to his sense, he was striving sincerely and directly to give his feeling its faithfullest expression. His color is beautiful because his idea was beautiful. The expression is of the very essence of the thought; it *is* the thought, but the thought embodied. "Coleridge," says Carlyle, "remarks very pertinently

somewhere that whenever you find a sentence musically worded, of true rhythm and melody in the words, there is something deep and good in the meaning, too. For body and soul, word and idea, go strangely together here as everywhere." Not to look beyond the material is to miss the meaning of the work.

In an art such as music, in which form and content are one and inextricable, it is not difficult to understand that the medium of expression which the art employs is necessarily symbolic, for here the form cannot exist apart from the meaning to be conveyed. In the art of literature, however, the case is not so clear, for the material with which the poet, the novelist, the dramatist works, material made up of the facts of the world about us, we are accustomed to regard as objective realities. An incident is an incident, the inevitable issue of precedent circumstances, and that 's all

there is to it. Character is the result of heredity, environment, training, plus the inexplicable *Ego*. To regard these facts of life which are so actual and immediate as a kind of animate algebraic formulæ seems absurd, but absurd only as one is unable to penetrate to the inner meaning of things. "Madame Bovary," to take an example quite at random, is called a triumph of realism. Now realism, of all literary methods, should register the fact as it is, and least of all should concern itself with symbols. But this great novel is more than the record of one woman's life. Any one who has come to understand the character and temperament of Flaubert as revealed in his Letters must feel that "Madame Bovary" is no arbitrary recital of tragic incident, but those people who move through his pages, what they do and what goes on about them, expressed for Flaubert his own dreary, baffled rebellion against life. That the artist

may consciously employ the facts of life, not for the sake of the fact, but to communicate his feeling by thus bodying it forth in concrete symbols, there is explicit testimony. In an essay dealing with his own method of composition, Poe writes: "I prefer commencing with the consideration of an *effect*. Keeping originality *always* in view . . . I say to myself, in the first place, 'of the innumerable effects or impressions of which the heart, the intellect, or (more generally) the soul is susceptible, what one shall I, on the present occasion, select?' Having chosen a novel first, and secondly, a vivid effect, I consider whether it can be best wrought by incident or tone . . . afterwards looking about me (or rather within) for such combinations of event or tone as shall best aid me in the construction of the effect." Yes, physical circumstances, the succession of incident, shifting momentary grouping of persons,

traits of character in varied combination and contrast, — all these are significant for the literary artist of spiritual relations.

As the symbol of what the artist feels and strives to express, the individual work of art is necessarily more than any mere transcript of fact. It is the meeting and mingling of nature and the spirit of man; the result of their union is fraught with the inheritance of the past and holds within it the limitless promise of the future. The work of art is a focus, gathering into itself all the stored experience of the artist, and radiating in turn so much to the beholder as he is able at the moment to receive. A painter is starting out to sketch. Through underbrush and across the open he pushes his way, beset by beauty on every side, and storing impressions, sensations, thoughts. At last his eye lights upon some clump of brush, some meadow or hill, which seems at the instant to sum up and express his

accumulated experience. In rendering this bit of nature, he pours out upon his canvas his store of feeling. It is the single case which typifies his entire course. "The man's whole life preludes the single deed." His way through the world has been just such a gathering up of experience, and each new work which he produces is charged with the collected wealth of years.

The special work is the momentary epitome of the artist's total meaning. He finds this brief passage in nature beautiful then and there because it expresses what he feels and means. He does not try to reproduce the thing, but uses the thing for what it signifies. The thing is but for that moment: it signifies all that has gone before. As he watches, a cloud passes over the sun and the face of nature is darkened. Suddenly the scene bursts into light again. In itself the landscape is no brighter than before the sun was darkened. The painter

feels it brighter for the contrast, and inevitably his rendering of its aspect is heightened and intensified.

Art is nature heightened and intensified as nature is interpreted through the transfiguring medium of the human spirit. To the object is added

> "The gleam,
> The light that never was on sea or land,
> The consecration and the poet's dream."

After an early morning in the fields, Corot withdraws to his house to rest. "I dream of the morning landscape," he writes; "I dream my picture, and presently I will paint my dream." But not only does the artist render the beauty which this landscape happens to express for him: he charges these colors and forms with the beauty of all landscape. Corot painted *at* Ville d'Avray; *what* he painted was God's twilight or dawn enwrapping tree and pool. In gratitude and worship he revealed to men the tender, in-

effable poetry of gray dawns in all places and for all time. Millet's peasants were called John and Peter and Charles, and they tilled the soil of France; but on their bowed shoulders rests the universal burden; these dumb figures are eloquent of the uncomplaining, hopeless "peasanthood" of the world. In the actual to discern the ideal, in the appearance to penetrate to the reality, without taking leave of the material to reveal the spiritual,—this is the mystery and vocation of the artist, and his achievement is art.

III

THE WORK OF ART AS BEAUTIFUL

JUST as nature and life are significant as the material manifestation of spiritual forces and relations, so a work of art is in its turn the symbol by which the artist communicates himself; it is his revelation to men of the beauty he has perceived and felt.

Beauty is not easy to define. That conception which regards beauty as the power to awaken merely agreeable emotions is limited and in so far false. Another source of misunderstanding is the confusion of beauty with moralistic values. It is said that beauty is the Ideal; and by many the "Ideal" is taken to mean ideal goodness. With righteousness and sin as such beauty

has no concern. Much that is evil in life, much that offends against the moral law, must be regarded as beautiful in so far as it plays its necessary part in the universal whole. Clearing away these misconceptions, then, an approximate definition would be that the essence of beauty is harmony. So soon as a detail is shown in its relation to a whole, then it becomes beautiful because it is expressive of the supreme unity. A discord in music is felt to be a discord only as it is isolated; when it takes its fitting and inevitable place in the large unity of the symphony, it becomes full of meaning. The hippopotamus, dozing in his tank at the Zoo, is wildly grotesque and ugly. But who shall say that, seen in the fastnesses of his native rivers, he is not the beautiful perfect fulfilling of nature's harmony? To a race of blacks, the fair-skinned Apollo appearing among them could not but be monstrous. The smoking factory,

sordid and hideous, is beautiful to him who sees that it accomplishes a necessary function in the great scheme of life. Beauty is adaptation. Whatever is truly useful is in so far truly beautiful. The steam engine and the battleship are beautiful just as truly as Titian's Madonna, glorified and sweeping upward into the presence of God the Father. Only what is vital and serviceable, and whatever is that, is beautiful.

When the spirit of man perceives a unity in things, a working together of parts, there beauty exists. It resides in the synthesis of details to the end of shaping a complete whole. This perception, this synthesis, is a function of the human mind. Beauty is not in the landscape, but in the intelligence which apprehends it. Evidence of this fundamental truth is the fact that the same landscape is more "beautiful" to one man than to another, or to a third, perhaps, is not beautiful at all. It is only as the individual

perceives a relation among the parts resulting in a total unity that the object becomes beautiful for him.

This abstract exposition may be made clearer by a graphic illustration. Here are four figures composed of the same elements :—

Fig. I.

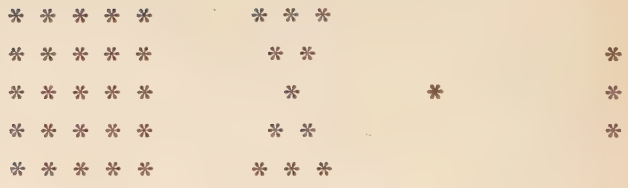

Fig. II. Fig. III. Fig. IV.

Figure I., far from being pleasing, is positively disquieting. With the other three

figures, the perception of their form is attended with a kind of pleasure. Whereas the first figure is without form and is meaningless, each of the second group exhibits harmony, balance, proportion, interrelation of parts: each is perceived to be a whole. Although experience itself comes to men in fragments and seemingly without order, yet the human mind is so constituted as to require that an idea or a truth be shown to be a whole before the mind can comprehend it. In considering the element of balance, it should be noted, as illustrated by Figure IV., that balance is not necessarily perfect symmetry. A Gothic cathedral is beautiful no less than a Greek temple. In a painting of a landscape, for example, it is necessary simply that the masses and the tones stand in balancing relation; the perfect symmetry of geometric exactness, characteristic of Hellenic and Renaissance art, is not required. In the work which embodies the

artist's perception of the universal harmony, there must be rhythm, order, unity in variety; so framed it becomes expressive and significant.

As the symbol of beauty, the work of art is itself beautiful in that it manifests in itself that wholeness and integrity which is beauty. Every work of art is informed by a controlling design; it subordinates manifold details to a definite whole; it reduces and adjusts its parts to an all-inclusive, perceptible unity. The Nuremberg key must have some sort of rhythm; the rug or vestment must exhibit a pattern which can be seen to be a whole; the canvas must show balance in the composition, and the color must be "in tone." In any work of art there must be design and purpose.

In nature there is much which to the limited perception of men does not appear to be beautiful, for there is much

that does not manifest superficially the necessary harmony. The landscape at noonday under the blaze of the relentless sun discloses many things which are seemingly incongruous with one another. The dull vision of men cannot penetrate to the unity underlying it all. At twilight, as the shadows of evening wrap it round, the same landscape is invested with mysterious beauty. Conflicting details are lost, harsh outlines are softened and merged, discordant colors are mellowed and attuned. Nature has brought her field and hill and clustered dwellings into "tone." So the artist, who has perceived a harmony where the common eye saw it not, selects; he suppresses here, strengthens there, fuses, and brings all into unity.

Harmony wherever perceived is beauty. Beauty made manifest by the agency of the human spirit is art. Art, in order to reveal this harmony to men, must work

through selection, through rejection and emphasis, through interpretation. It is not difficult to understand, then, that the exact reproduction of the facts of the external world is not in a true sense art.

The photograph, which is the most exact method of reproducing outward aspect, is denied the title of a work of art; that is, the photograph direct, which has not been retouched. To be sure, the photograph is the product of a mechanical process, and is not, except incidentally, the result of human skill. Another kind of reproduction of outward aspect, however, virtually exact, which does show the evidence of human skill, is yet not entitled to rank as art, — the imitative or deceptive picture. Photograph and picture are ruled out equally on the one count. Neither selects.

In an exhibition of paintings were once displayed two panels precisely similar in

appearance, presenting an army coat and cap, a sabre and a canteen. At a distance there was no point of difference in the two. A nearer view disclosed the fact that on one panel the objects were real and that the other panel was painted. The beholder was pleased by the exhibition of the painter's skill; but in so far as the work did not reveal a significance or beauty in these objects which the artist had seen and the beholder had not, it fell short of being a work of art. Just as the key of the Nuremberg craftsman was a work of art in that it was for him the expression, the rendering actual, of a new beauty it was given him to conceive, so only that is art which makes manifest a beauty that is new, a beauty that is truly born of the artist's own spirit. The repetition of existing forms with no modification by the individual workman is not creation, but imitation; and imitation is manufacture, not art. Inasmuch as the

two panels could not be distinguished, the presentment signified no more than the reality. Tried as a work of art, the imitative picture, in common with the photograph, lacks the necessary element of interpretation, of revelation. That the representation may become art, there must be added to it some new attribute or quality born of the artist's spirit. The work must take on new meaning.

As lending his work significance of an obvious sort, a significance not necessarily "pictorial," the painter might see in the objects some story they have to tell. The plaster of the garret wall where they are hanging he may show to be cracked; that tear in the coat speaks of faithful service, but the coat hangs limp and dusty now; the inscription on the canteen is almost obliterated, and the strap is broken; the sabre, which shows the marks of stern usage along its blade, is spotted with rust: the whole

composition means Trusty Servants in Neglect. By the emphasis of certain aspects the picture is made to signify more than the mere objects themselves, wherein there was nothing salient. The meaning is imposed upon them or drawn out of them by the artist. Or again, the painter may see in these things the expression for him of a harmony which he can manifest by the arrangement of line and color, and he so disposes his material as to make that harmony visible. It is, then, not the crude fact which the artist transcribes, but rather some feeling he has toward the fact. By selection, by adjustment, he gives this special aspect of the fact emphasis and relief. In virtue of his interpretation the picture acquires a significance that is new; it gives the beholder a pleasure which the fact itself did not give, and thus it passes over into the domain of art.

The purpose of art is not the reproduc-

tion of a beautiful object, but the expression in objective form of a beautiful idea. A plaster cast of a hand, however comely the hand may be, is not a work of art. As with the photograph, the work involves only incidentally the exercise of human skill. But that is not all. In order to render the work in the spirit of art, the sculptor must model, not the hand, but his sense of the hand; he must draw out and express its character, its significance. To him it is not a certain form in bone and flesh; to him it means grace, delicacy, sensitiveness, or perhaps resolution, strength, force. As the material symbol of his idea of the hand, he will select and make salient such lines and contours as are expressive to him of that character.

Indeed, so little depends upon the exact subject represented and so much upon the artist's feeling toward it, so much depends upon the spirit of the rendering, that the

representation of a subject uninteresting or even "ugly" in itself may be beautiful. In the art of literature, the *subject* is drawn from the life of man. The material of the poem, the novel, the drama, is furnished by man's total experience, the sum of his sensations, impressions, emotions, and the events in which he is concerned. But experience crowds in upon him at every point, without order and without relation; the daily round of living is for most men a humdrum thing. Yet it is just this rudimentary and undistinguished mass of experience which is transmuted into literature; by the alchemy of art the representation of that which is without interest becomes interesting. And it happens on this wise. Life is humdrum only in so far as it is meaningless; men can endure any amount of drudgery and monotony provided that it lead somewhere, that they perceive its relation to a larger unity which is the total

of life. As part of a whole which can be apprehended, immediately it acquires purpose and becomes significant. It is the sense of meaning in life which gives color and warmth to the march of uniform days. So the literary artist shapes his inchoate material to a definite end; out of the limitless complex details at his command, he selects such passages of background, such incidents, and such traits of character as make for the setting forth of the idea he has conceived. Clearly the artist cannot use everything, clearly he does not aim to reproduce the fact: there are abridgments and suppressions, as there are accent and emphasis. The finished work is a composite, embodying what is essential of many, many preliminary studies and sketches, wrought and compiled with generous industry. The master is recognized in what he omits; what is suppressed is felt but not perceived: the great artist, in the result, steps from peak to peak.

"The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
At one stride comes the Dark."

Thus with three strokes the master Coleridge depicts the onrush of the night over boundless spaces of sky and sea. Within the compass of a few lines, Tennyson registers the interminable, empty monotony of weary years:

"No sail from day to day, but every day
The sunrise broken into scarlet shafts
Among the palms and ferns and precipices;
The blaze upon the waters to the east;
The blaze upon his island overhead;
The blaze upon the waters to the west;
Then the great stars that globed themselves in Heaven,
The hollower-bellowing ocean, and again
The scarlet shafts of sunrise — but no sail."

Thus through selection does the artist work to interpretation. By detaching the eternal meaning from the momentary fact, by embodying his sense of its significance in such

concrete forms as symbolize his idea, by investing the single instance with universally typical import, then in very truth he represents. Nature is not the subject of art; she is the universal treasury from whose infinitely various store the artist selects his symbols.

A special method in art may here suggest itself as having for its purpose to reproduce the fact in perfect fidelity; the method is called *realism*. But a moment's considerate analysis shows that realism is only a label for one manner of handling, and in the end comes no nearer the object as it "really" is. In its essence realism is the artist's personal vision of the fact, exactly as idealism or romanticism or impressionism is personal. For after all, what is the reality? A chance newsboy is offering his papers on a crowded street corner. The fine lady recoils from his filth and from all contact with him; the philanthropist sees in

him a human being to help and to redeem; the philosopher regards him dispassionately as a "social factor," the result of heredity and environment; the artist cries out in joy as his eye lights upon good stuff to paint. But all the while, which of these conceptions figures the "real" newsboy? Not one. For he is all these together; and the single observer, whatever his bias, cannot apprehend him at every point. Any attempt to represent him involves selection and interpretation, the suppression of some traits in order to emphasize others, which are the special aspects that have impressed the given observer. So there is no essential realism. The term applies to the method of those who choose to render what is less comforting in life, who insist on those characteristics of things which men call ugly. In realism, just as truly as in any other kind of treatment, is expressed the personality of the artist, his own peculiar way of envisaging the world.

A work of art is born of the artist's desire to express his joy in some new aspect of the universal harmony which has been disclosed to him. The mission of art is through interpretation to reveal. It happens sometimes that a visitor at an exhibition of paintings is shocked by a picture which seems to him for the moment impossible, because so far beyond the range of his experience; yet withal he finds himself attracted by it and he returns to study it. It is not many days before his glance is arrested by that very effect in nature, and he says, "Why, that is like that picture!" It was the artist who first saw it and who taught him to see it for himself. When one observes an effect in nature or in life that one calls "a Corot" or "a Whistler," one means that to Corot or to Whistler is due the glory of discovering that fuller beauty and revealing it. Browning makes Fra Lippo Lippi say :

"We 're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
And so they are better, painted — better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that."

This revealing power of art is not restricted to the individual appreciator. It is said that the French are an artistic people and that Americans are not. The explanation is that for generations the artists of France have been discovering to their countrymen the beauty that is around them at their very door, and have taught them to appreciate it. The Americans will be an artistic people when our artists shall have done the like for us. When there shall have been for generations a truly native American art, there will be a public to understand and to appreciate. So it is that everywhere the high function of art is to reveal. As

a friend, more sensitive and more enthusiastic, with whom we are strolling, points out to us many beauties by the wayside or in trees and sky, so the artist takes us by the hand and leads us out into life, indicating for us a harmony to which we were blind before. Burdened with affairs and the daily round, we had not thought to look off and out to the spreading meadows tossing into hills which roll upward into the blue heaven beyond.

The beauty thus revealed is a beauty which the artist has apprehended in spirit and which he would make actual. A work of art is the expression of an aspiration. The crude and tawdry images of the Madonna set in the roadside cross are just as truly a work of art as the rapt saints of Giotto or the perfect Madonnas of Raphael in so far as they are expressive of what those poor, devout souls who fashioned them felt of worship and of love. After

all, the difference is that Giotto felt more than they, Raphael was endowed with more accomplished powers of expression. The work receives its import as it is the faithful utterance of him who shaped it, as it is genuinely the realization of his ideal. "The gift without the giver is bare." But it is no less true that the gift without the receiver is sterile and void, for art involves not only its creator's intention but also its message to him whom the work reaches. In a book, it is not only what the writer says that makes its significance but also what the reader thinks as he reads. In so far as any man finds in picture or poem or song a new beauty, a fuller sense of harmony than was his before, for him that is a work of art.

Thus the standard by which art is to be tried is relative. For its creator, the work is art in that it embodies a perception of new harmony that is peculiarly his. In the

material result, this special character is imparted to the work by the artist's instinctive selection. No two painters, though equipped with equal technical skill and perhaps of like tastes and preferences, would or indeed could render the same sweep of landscape in precisely similar fashion. Obviously, to set down everything were at once an impossibility and an untruth, for the detail of nature is infinite and the beholder does not see everything. Each is bound to select such details as impress him, and his selection will be determined by the way in which he as a unique personality, an individual different from every other man in the whole wide universe, feels about the bit of nature before him. In expressing by his special medium what he feels about the landscape, he aims, in the selection of material form and color, to detach and render visible what of essential truth the landscape means to him, to purge it of

accidents, and register its eternal beauty. The painter will not attempt, then, to reproduce the physical facts of nature, — the topography, geology, botany, of the landscape, — but rather through those facts in terms of color and form he tries to render its *expression:* its quality, as brilliance, tenderness; its mood, as joy, mystery, setting down those salient aspects of it which combine to give it character and meaning. For landscape — to recall the exposition of a preceding page — has its expression as truly as the human face. A man knows his friends not by the shape of the nose or the color of the eyes, but by the character which these features express, the personality which shines in the face and radiates from it. This effluence of the soul within is the essential man; people call it the "expression." As with human life, so with the many aspects of nature. External traits are merged in the spiritual meaning.

The material forms have the power of affecting the spirit thus or so; and in man's reaction on his universe they come to take on a symbolic emotional significance. Each manifestation of nature arouses in the artist, more or less consciously on his part, some feeling toward it: he cares, then, to represent these external material forms, whether a flower, a landscape, a human face, only because there is in them something in which he delights; he fashions the work of art in praise of the thing he loves. To the clever technician who imitatively paints the flower as he knows it to be,

> "A primrose on the river's brim
> A yellow primrose is to him
> And it is nothing more."

But to the artist

> "The meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

And it is these thoughts that he cares to

express and not the visible truth about the flower. A writer was walking along the streets of Paris on a day in early March.

"It was dark and rather cold. I was gloomy, and walked because I had nothing to do. I passed by some flowers placed breast-high upon a wall. A jonquil in bloom was there. It is the strongest expression of desire: it was the first perfume of the year. I felt all the happiness destined for man. This unutterable harmony of souls, the phantom of the ideal world, arose in me complete. I never felt anything so great or so instantaneous. I know not what shape, what analogy, what secret of relation it was that made me see in this flower a limitless beauty. . . . I shall never enclose in a conception this power, this immensity that nothing will express; this form that nothing will contain; this ideal of a better world which one feels, but which it would seem that nature has not made."

And if Sénancour had set himself to paint his jonquil as he has written about it, how

that tender flower would have been transfigured and glorified!

What the artist aims to render is not the rose but the beauty of the rose, his sense of one chord in the universal harmony which the rose sounds for him, not that only, but the beauty of all roses that ever were or ever shall be; and inevitably he will select such colors and such lines as bring that special and interpreted beauty into relief, and so make manifest to the beholder what was revealed to his own higher vision, by virtue of which, and not because of any exceptional technical skill, he is an artist.

IV

ART AND APPRECIATION

It may be that some reader of the foregoing pages will attempt to apply the principles therein set forth to the pictures shown in the next exhibition he happens to attend. It is more than probable that in his first efforts he will be disappointed. For the principles discussed have dealt with art in its authentic manifestations; and not every painter is an artist, not every picture is a work of art.

At the very outset it should be said that an exhibition of paintings as ordinarily made up is confusing and wholly illogical. We may suppose that a volume to be read through in one sitting of two hours is placed

in the hands of an intelligent reader. The book consists of essays, poems, short stories, and dramatic dialogue, each within the compass of a few pages, each contributed by a different writer as an example of his work for the year. We may suppose now that the reader is asked to gather from this volume, read hastily and either superficially or in random bits, some idea of the significance of each author and of the import and scope of contemporary American literature. Is it a fair test? This volume, we may further suppose, is practically the only means by which the writer can get his work before the public. A public means a purchaser, and of course the writer must live. Is it reasonable to think that every number contributed to such a volume will be a work of art, wrought with singleness of heart and in loving devotion to an ideal? There are still with us those who "work for money" and those who "work for fame." There

are those who believe in "giving the public what it wants," and the numbers they contribute to the yearly volumes are samples of the sort of thing they do, from which the public may order. In the table of contents stand celebrated names; and to the work of such men, perhaps, will turn the seeker after what he thinks ought to be the best, not realizing that these are the men who have known how to "give the people what they want," that the people do not always want the good and right thing, and that it is somewhat the habit of genius to dispense with contemporary recognition. If there is here or there in the book an essay or a poem the product of thought and effort and offered in all seriousness, how little chance it has of being appreciated, except by a few, even if it is remarked at all in the jumble of miscellaneous contributions.

This hypothetical volume is a fair parallel of an annual exhibition of paintings. In

such an exhibition the number of works of art, the true, inevitable expression of a new message, is relatively small. The most celebrated and most popular painters are not necessarily by that fact great artists, or indeed artists at all. Contemporary judgment is notoriously liable to go astray. The gods of one generation are often the laughing stock of the next; the idols of the fathers are torn down and trampled under foot by the children. Some spirits there have been of liberal promise who have not been able to withstand the demands made upon them by early popular approval. Such is the struggle and soul's tragedy which is studied convincingly in Mr. Zangwill's novel, "The Master." No assault on the artist's integrity is so insidious as immediate favor, which in its turn begets the fatal desire to please.

To the "successful" painters, however, are for the most part accorded the places

of honor on academy walls. The canvases of these men are seen first by the visitor; but they are not all. There are other pictures which promise neither better nor worse. Here are paintings of merit, good in color and good in drawing, but empty of any meaning. Scattered through the exhibition are the works of a group of able men, imitating themselves, each trying to outdo the others by a display of cleverness in solving some "painter's problem" or by some startling effect of subject or handling. But it is a sad day for any artist when he ceases to find his impulse and inspiration either in his own spirit or in nature, and when he looks to his fellow craftsmen for the motive of his work. Again, there are pictures by men who, equipped with adequate technical skill, have caught the manner of a master, and mistaking the manner for the message it was simply intended to express, they degrade it into a mannerism

and turn out a product which people do not distinguish from the authentic utterances of the master. The artist is a seer and prophet, the channel of divine influences: the individual painter, sculptor, writer, is a very human being.

As he looks over these walls, clamorous of the commonplace and the commercial, the seeker after what is good and true in art realizes how very few of these pictures have been rendered in the spirit of love and joy. The painter has one eye on his object and one eye on the public; and too often, as a distinguished actor once said of the stage manager whose vision is divided between art and the box office, the painter is a one-eyed man.

A painter once refused to find anything to interest him, still less to move him, in a silent street with a noble spire detaching itself vaguely from the luminous blue depths of a midnight sky, because, he

said, "People won't buy dark things, so what's the use? You might as well do bright, pretty things that they will buy, and that are just as easy to make." A portrait-painter gives up landscape subjects because, as he does not hesitate to declare, it hurts his business. And the painters themselves are not altogether to blame for this attitude towards their work. The fault lies half with the people who buy pictures, having the money, and who have not a gleam of understanding of the meaning of art. A woman who had ordered her house to be furnished and decorated expensively, remarked to a caller who commented on a water-color hanging in the drawing-room: "Yes, I think it matches the wall-paper very nicely." When such is the purpose of those who paint pictures and such is the understanding of those who buy them, it is not surprising that not every picture is inevitably a work of art.

But what is the poor seeker after art to do? The case is by no means hopeless. In current exhibitions a few canvases strike a new note; and by senses delicately attuned this note can be distinguished within the jangle of far louder and popular tunes ground out, as it were, by the street-piano. Seriously to study contemporary painting, however, the logical opportunity is furnished by the exhibitions of the works of single men or of small groups. As the reader who wishes to understand an author or perhaps a school does not content himself with random extracts, but instead isolates the man for the moment and reads his work consecutively and one book in its relation to his others; so the student of pictures can appreciate the work and understand the significance of a given painter only as he sees a number of his canvases together and in relation. So, he is able to gather something of the man's total meaning.

Widely different from annual exhibitions, too, are galleries and museums; for here the proportion of really good things is immeasurably larger. In the study of masterpieces, it need hardly be said, the amateur may exercise judgment and moderation. He should not try to do too much at one time, for he can truly appreciate only as he enters fully into the spirit of the work and allows it to possess him. To achieve this sympathy and understanding within the same hour for more than a very few great works is manifestly impossible. Such appreciation involves fundamentally a quick sensitiveness to the appeal and the variously expressive power of color and line and form. To win from the picture its fullest meaning, the observer may bring to bear some knowledge of the artist who produced it and of the age and conditions in which he lived. But in the end he must surrender himself to the work of art, bring-

ing to it his intellectual equipment, his store of sensuous and emotional experience, his entire power of being moved.

For when all is said, there is no single invariable standard by which to try a work of art: its significance to the appreciator rests upon his capacity at the moment to receive it. "A jest's prosperity lies in the ear of him that hears it." The appreciator need simply ask himself, "What has this work to reveal to me of beauty that I have not perceived for myself? I shall not look for the pretty and the agreeable. But what of new significance, energy, life, has this work to express to me? I will accept no man entirely and unquestioningly, I will condemn no one unheard. No man has the whole truth; every man has some measure of the truth, however small. Let it be my task to find it and to separate it from what is unessential and false. In my search for what is true, I will conserve my

integrity and maintain my independence. And I shall recognize my own wherever I may find it."

"Man is the measure of all things," declared an ancient philosopher. And his teaching has not been superseded to-day. The individual is the creator of his own universe; he is the focus of the currents and forces of his world. The meaning of all things is subjective. So the measure of beauty in life for a man is determined by his capacity to receive and understand. Thus it is that a man's joy in experience and his appreciation of art in any of its manifestations are conditioned by the opportunity that nature or art furnishes for his spirit to exercise itself. In the reading of poetry, for example, we seek the expression of ourselves. Our first emotion is, perhaps, a simple, unreflecting delight, the delight which a butterfly must feel among the flowers or that of a child play-

ing in the fields under the warm sun; it is a delight wholly physical, — pure sensation. A quick taking of the breath, the escape of a sigh, inarticulate and uncritical, are the only expression we can find at that instant for what we feel: as when an abrupt turn of the road spreads out before us a landscape of which we had not dreamed, or we enter for the first time the presence of the Apollo Belvedere. We know simply that we are pleased. But after nerves have ceased to tingle so acutely, we begin to think; and we seek to give account to ourselves of the beauty which for the moment we could but feel. Once arrived at the attitude of reflection, we find that the poetry which affects us most and to which we oftenest return is the poetry that contains the record of our own experience, but heightened, the poetry which expresses our desires and aspirations, that in which we recognize ourselves

elevated and idealized. In so far as we see in it the ennobled image of our own nature, so far it has power to hold us and to stir us.

An elementary manifestation of the tendency to seek in art the record of our own experience is seen in the popularity of those pictures whose subjects are familiar and can be immediately recognized. On a studio wall was once hanging a "Study of Brush," showing the play of sunlight through quivering leaves. A visitor asked the painter why he did not put some chickens in the foreground. To her the canvas was meaningless, for she had never seen, had never really seen, the sunlight dancing on burnished leaves. The chickens, which she had seen and could recognize, were the element of the familiar she required in order to find any significance in the picture.

This tendency, of which the demand

for chickens is a rudimentary manifestation, is the basis of all appreciation. The artist's revelation of the import of life we can receive and understand only as we have felt a little of that import for ourselves. Color is meaningless to a blind man, music does not exist for the deaf. To him who has never opened his eyes to behold the beauty of field and hill and trees and sky, to him whose spirit has not dimly apprehended something of that eternal significance of which these things are the material visible bodying forth, to such a one the work of the master is only so much paint and canvas. The task of the appreciator, then, is to develop his capacity to receive and enjoy.

That capacity is to be trained by the exercise of itself. Each new harmony which he is enabled to perceive intensifies his power to feel and widens the range of his vision. The more beauty he apprehends

in the world, so much the more of universal forces he brings into unity with his own personality. By this extension of his spirit he reaches out and becomes merged in the all-embracing life.

If the conception be true that a supreme unity, linking all seemingly chaotic details, ultimately brings them into order, and that this unity, which is spiritual, penetrates every atom of matter, fusing everything and making all things one; then the appreciator will realize that the significance of art is for the spirit. The beauty which the artist reveals is but the harmony which underlies the universal order; and he in his turn must apprehend that beauty spiritually.

From this truth it follows that the condition of æsthetic enjoyment, or in other words the appreciation of beauty, is detachment of spirit and remoteness from practical consequences. The classic illustration

of the truth is the saying of Lucretius, that it is sublime to stand on the shore and behold a shipwreck. It is sublime only as one's personal interests and feelings are not engaged. It would not be sublime if it were possible for the spectator to aid in averting the catastrophe; it would not be sublime if one's friends were aboard the ship. One is able to appreciate beauty only as one is able to detach one's self from what is immediate and practical, and by virtue of this detachment, to apprehend the spiritual significance. The sublimity of the shipwreck lies in what it expresses of the impersonal might of elemental forces and man's impotence in the struggle against nature. That sublimity, which is one manifestation of beauty, is of the spirit, and by the spirit it must be apprehended.

To illustrate this truth by a few homely examples. A farmer looking out on his fields of tossing wheat, drenched in golden

sunlight, exclaims, "Look, is n't that beautiful!" What he really means is: "See there the promise of a rich harvest, and it is mine." If the fields belonged to his neighbor, his feelings towards them would be quite different. No, their *beauty* is to be seen and felt only by him whose mind is free of thoughts of personal enrichment and who thus can perceive the harmony with life of golden sunshine and nature's abundant gifts. The farmer could not see beyond the material and its value to him as material. But beauty lies deeper than that, for it is the expression of spiritual relations.

Two men are riding together in a railway carriage. As the train draws into a city, they pass a little group of tumble-down houses, brown and gray, a heap of corners thrown together. One man thinks: "What dreary lives these people must lead who dwell there." The other, with no such

stirring of the sympathy, sees a wonderful "scheme" in grays and browns, or an expressive composition or ordering of line. Neither could think the thoughts of the other at the same time with his own. One feels a practical and physical reaction, and he cannot therefore at that moment penetrate to the meaning of these things for the spirit; and that meaning is the harmony which they express.

From the tangle of daily living with its conflict of interests and its burden of practical needs, the appreciator turns to art with its power to chasten and to tranquillize. In art, he finds the revelation in fuller measure of a beauty which he has felt but vaguely. He realizes that underlying the external chaos of immediate practical experience rests a supreme and satisfying order. Of that order he can here and now perceive but little, hemmed in as he is by the material world, whose meaning he dis-

cerns as through a glass, darkly. Yet he keeps resolutely on his way, secure in his kinship with the eternal spirit, and rewarded by momentary glimpses of the "broken arcs" which he knows will in the end take their appointed places in the "perfect round."

V

THE ARTIST

Out of chaos, order. Man's life on the earth is finite and fragmentary, but it is the constant effort of his spirit to bring the scattering details of momentary experience into an enduring harmony with his personality and with that supreme unity of which he is a part.

The man who out of the complex disarray of his little world effects a new harmony is an artist. He who fashioned the first cup, shaping it according to his ideal, —for no prototype existed,—and in response to his needs; he who, taking this elementary form, wrought upon it with his fingers and embellished it according to

his ideal and in response to his need of expressing himself; he, again, who out of the same need for expression adds to the cup anything new: each of these workmen is an artist. The reproduction of already existing forms, with no modification by the individual workman, is not art. So, for example, only that painter is an artist who adds to his representation of the visible world some new attribute or quality born of his own spirit. Primitive artisan, craftsman, painter, each creates in that he reveals and makes actual some part, which before was but potential, of the all-embracing life.

As the artist, then, wins new reaches of experience and brings them into unity, he reveals new beauty, new to men yet world-old. For the harmony which he effects is new only in the sense that it was not before perceived. As, in the physical universe, not an atom of matter through the ages is created or destroyed, so the supreme spiritual

life is constant in its sum and complete. Of this life individuals partake in varying measure; their growth is determined by how much of it they make their own. The growth of the soul in this sense is not different from man's experience of the physical world. The child is born: he grows up into his family; the circle widens to include neighbors and the community; the circle widens again as the boy goes away to school and then to college. With ever-widening sweep the outermost bound recedes, though still embracing him, as he reaches out to Europe and at length compasses the earth, conquering experience and bringing its treasures into tribute to his own spirit. The things were there; but for the boy each was in turn created as he made it his own. So the artist, revealing new aspects of the supreme unity, creates in the sense that he makes possible for his fellows a fuller taking-up of this life into themselves.

It may be said that he is the greatest artist who has felt the most of harmony in life,—the greatest artist but potentially. The beauty he has perceived must in accordance with our human needs find expression concretely, because it is only as he manifests himself in forms which we can understand that we are able to recognize him. Though a mute, inglorious Milton were Milton still, yet our human limitations demand his utterance that we may know him. So the artist accomplishes his mission when he communicates himself. The human spirit is able to bring the supreme life into unity with itself according to the measure of its own growth made possible through expression.

The supreme life, of which every created thing partakes, — the stone, the flower, the animal, and man, — is beauty, because it is the supreme harmony wherein everything has its place in relation to every other thing.

This central unity has its existence in expression. The round earth, broken off from the stellar system and whirling along its little orbit through space, is yet ever in communication with the great system; the tree, with its roots in the earth, puts forth branches, the branches expand into twigs, the twigs burst into leaves whose veins reach out into the air; out of the twigs spring buds swelling into blossoms, the blossoms ripen into fruit, the fruit drops seed into the earth which gave it and springs up into new trees. The tree by its growth, which is the putting forth of itself or expression, develops needs, these needs are satisfied, and the satisfying of the needs is the condition of its continued expansion.

Man, too, has his existence in expression. By growth through expression, which is the creation of a new need, he is enabled to take up more into himself; he

brings more into the unity of his personality, and thus he expands into the universal harmony.

The unity which underlies the cosmos —to define once more the conception which is the basis of the preceding chapters— is of the spirit. The material world which we see and touch is but the symbol and bodying forth of spiritual relations. The tranquillizing, satisfying power of art is due to the revelation which art accomplishes of a spiritual harmony which transcends the seeming chaos of instant experience. So it comes about that harmony, or beauty, which is of the spirit, is apprehended by the spirit. That faculty in the artist by which he is able to perceive beauty is called *temperament*. By temperament is to be understood the receptive faculty, the power to feel, the capacity for sensations, emotions, and "such intellectual apprehensions as, in strength and directness and

their immediately realized values at the bar of an actual experience, are most like sensations." The function of temperament is to receive and to transmit, to interpret, to create in the sense that it reveals. In the result it is felt to be present only as the medium through which the forces behind it come to expression.

Art, the human spirit, temperament, — these terms are general and abstract. Now the abstract to be realized must be made concrete. Just as art, in order to be manifest, must be embodied in the particular work, as the statue, the picture, the building, the drama, the symphony, so the human spirit becomes operative in the person of the individual, and temperament may be best studied in the character of the individual artist.

As temperament is the receptive faculty, the artist's attitude toward life is what Wordsworth called "wise passiveness," —

Wordsworth, the poet of "impassioned contemplation." Keats, too, — and among the poets, whose vision of beauty was more beautiful, whose grasp on the truth more true? — characterizes himself as "addicted to passiveness." It is of temperament that Keats is writing when he says in a letter: "That quality which goes to form a man of achievement, especially in literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously, is *Negative Capability*." In another letter he writes: —

"It has been an old comparison for our urging on — the Beehive; however, it seems to me that we should rather be the flower than the Bee — for it is a false notion that more is gained by receiving than giving — no, the receiver and the giver are equal in their benefits. The flower, I doubt not, receives a fair guerdon from the Bee — its leaves blush deeper in the next spring — and who shall say between Man and Woman which is the most delighted? Now it is more noble to sit like Jove than to fly like Mercury

— let us not therefore go hurrying about and collecting honey, bee-like buzzing here and there impatiently from a knowledge of what is to be aimed at; but let us open our leaves like a flower and be passive and receptive — budding patiently under the eye of Apollo and taking hints from every noble insect that favours us with a visit — sap will be given us for meat and dew for drink. . . .

"O fret not after knowledge — I have none,
And yet my song comes native with the warmth.
O fret not after knowledge — I have none,
And yet the Evening listens. He who saddens
At thought of idleness cannot be idle,
And he 's awake who thinks himself asleep."

Still again he says: "The Genius of Poetry must work out its own salvation in a man: It cannot be matured by law and precept, but by sensation and watchfulness in itself. That which is creative must create itself."

A nature so constituted, a nature receptive and passive, is necessarily withdrawn

from practical affairs. To revert to Keats as an example, for Keats is so wholly the artist, it is his remoteness from the daily life about him that makes him the man of no one country or time. His poetry has a kind of universality, but universality within a definite sphere, and that sphere is the world of things lovely and fair. In a playful mood Keats writes to his sister: "Give me Books, fruit, French wine and fine weather and a little music out of doors, played by somebody I do not know . . . and I can pass a summer very quietly without caring much about Fat Louis, fat Regent or the Duke of Wellington." These are trivial words; but they serve to define in some measure the artistic temperament.

For this characteristic remoteness from affairs the artist is sometimes reproached by those who pin their faith to material things. Such are not aware that for the

artist the only reality is the life of the spirit. The artist, as Carlyle says of the Man of Letters, "lives in the inward sphere of things, in the True, Divine and Eternal, which exists always, unseen to most, under the Temporary, Trivial: his being is in that." Temperament constitutes the whole moral nature of the artist. "With a great poet," says Keats, "the sense of beauty overcomes every consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration." It is the standard which measures the worth of any act. It is conscience, too; for the functions performed by conscience in the normal moral life of the man of action are fulfilled by the artist's devotion to his ideal; his service to his art is his sole and sufficient obligation.

And where the man of action looks to find his rewards in the approval of his fellow men, the artist cares to please himself. The very act of expressing is itself the joy

and the reward. To this truth Keats again stands as witness: "I feel assured," he says, "I should write from the mere yearning and fondness I have for the beautiful, even if my night's labours should be burnt every Morning and no eye ever shine upon them." And still again: "I value more the privilege of seeing great things in loneliness than the fame of a prophet." Not that the artist does not crave appreciation. His message fails of completeness if there is no ear to hear it, if it does not meet a sympathy which understands. But the true artist removes all shadow of petty vanity and becomes, in Whitman's phrase, "the free channel of himself." He is but the medium through whom the spirit of beauty reveals itself; in thankfulness and praise he but receives and transmits. That it is given him to see beauty and to interpret it is enough.

It is by virtue of his power to feel that

the artist is able to apprehend beauty; his temperament is ever responsive to new harmonies. By force of his imagination, which is one function of his temperament, he sends his spirit into other lives, absorbs their experience and makes it his own, and ultimately identifies himself with world forces and becomes creator. In a lyric passage in a letter Keats exclaims: —

"The mighty abstract Idea I have of Beauty in all things stifles the more divided and minute domestic happiness. . . . I feel more and more every day, as my imagination strengthens, that I do not live in this world alone, but in a thousand worlds. No sooner am I alone than shapes of epic greatness are stationed around me, and serve my Spirit the office which is equivalent to a King's body-guard — then 'Tragedy with sceptered pall comes sweeping by.' According to my state of mind I am with Achilles shouting in the Trenches, or with Theocritus in the Vales of Sicily. Or I throw my whole being into Troilus, and repeating those lines, 'I wander like a lost soul upon the Stygian Banks stay-

ing for waftage,' I melt into the air with a voluptuousness so delicate that I am content to be alone."

This power to penetrate and to identify was exercised with peculiar directness and plenitude by Walt Whitman, prophet of the omnipotence of man. To find the burden of his message formulated in the single phrase one may turn to his Poems quite at random.

"My spirit has pass'd in compassion and determination around the whole earth."

"I inhale great draughts of space,
The east and the west are mine, and the north and the south are mine.
. . . . . .
All seems beautiful to me."

Of the artist may be affirmed what Whitman affirms of the Answerer: —

"Every existence has its idiom, every thing has an idiom and tongue,

He resolves all tongues into his own and bestows it upon men, and any man translates, and any man translates himself also,
One part does not counteract another part, he is the joiner, he sees how they join."

As the artist sends out his spirit through the world, as he becomes the channel of universal and divine influences, so he is admitted to new and ever new revelations of beauty. And stirred by the glorious vision, he brings that beauty to earth, communicating it to his fellows and making them partakers of it, as he gives his feeling expression. Thus finding utterance as the prophet of God, he consummates his mission and takes his place in the world order. Herein he has his being, for life is expression; and each new harmony which he makes manifest is the medium of his fuller identification with the universal life.

So it is that the artist is the supreme interpreter, the mediator between man and beauty. His work is a work of joy, of gratitude, of worship. He is the happy servant of God, His prophet, through whom He declares Himself to the children of men.

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